

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Akira Sakima, 66, retired hog farmer, politician, and businessman

"Yeah, my mom used to sew our shirts and make the pants. She used to do all that and take care the pigs, boy. Chee, when I look back, if she were living, I would really treat her like a god, now. But, you know, we never did that. We always talk big now, but she work, work, work. Other parents, too. They really worked. Because everybody in the same predicament."

Akira Sakima, Okinawan, was born on October 6, 1918, in Waiakea, Hilo, Hawaii. The fifth of twelve children, Akira spent ten years of his childhood in the plantation community of Waiakea.

In the summer of 1928, the Sakima family took over a hog farm in the "Kam IV Road-Kalihi Mauka" area of Kalihi Valley. Akira spent the rest of his youth there, helping on the farm and participating in community sports.

He attended schools in Kalihi and was a graduating member of McKinley's class of 1937. He then became a full-time hog raiser, managing and working at the family-run farm.

Between 1958 and 1961, Akira served as manager of the Island Pork Producers Cooperative. He also entered politics at that time, serving as an Eleventh District Representative in the State Legislature from 1959 to 1976.

Now retired, Akira and his wife, Jane, still reside in Kalihi Valley. He is an elder with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, an active member of the United Okinawan Association, and president of the Kalihi-Palama Council.

Tape No. 11-30-1-84

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Akira Sakima (AS)

January 26, 1984

Manoa, Oahu

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mr. Akira Sakima on January 26, 1984 at the ESOHP office at Manoa, Oahu.

Okay. To start today's interview, can you tell me when and where you were born?

AS: I was born in Hilo, Hawaii, October 6, 1918. Waiakea.

MK: Can you tell me how many brothers and sisters you had in all in your family?

AS: In all, we had about twelve, but those who survived were eight of us. Six boys and two girls. Except that my oldest brother just passed away about two years ago in San Jose.

MK: What number child were you?

AS: I'm number five.

MK: What were your parents' names?

AS: My father's name was Matsu. My mother's name was Kama.

MK: Can you tell me about when your parents came to Hawaii?

AS: About 1900. Between 1900 and 1905. My dad came first, and then my mom came.

MK: Can you tell me where they came from?

AS: Oh, they came from Ginowan-son, Okinawa-ken. Both of them.

MK: Based on what you've heard from them, what was their lives like in Okinawa?

AS: Oh, was real poor. They used to talk about pigs living under their

bathroom. They'd eat what they let out. They talked about how cruel life was to them while in Okinawa, because they didn't have any natural resources. I guess the whole Okinawa-ken was rather poor. So, they came to Hawaii, and they didn't think of staying here that long, but they both passed away in Hawaii.

MK: What have you heard about the circumstances surrounding their coming to Hawaii?

AS: Well, they thought they could at least come to Hawaii, earn some money, send some money back, build a home, and go back some day. In fact, they sent my brother--soon as he graduated from high school, which is about 1929, he went to Okinawa, because they wanted to have somebody take care the family property back there. But he didn't turn out, he came home. (Chuckles) He had a good time, though. I guess he enjoyed. My other relatives were sent, too. They said Okinawa was really poor. They had to work, work, work to survive.

MK: So after your parents came to Hawaii hoping to make a better life, what did they think of life in Waiakea?

AS: Well, that was plantation, and only my dad worked in the plantation. To supplement his income, my mom--and of course, my dad helped, too--we had about two or three milking cows. I used to help them deliver milk. You know, no sanitation those days. No problem with the Board of Health. You just milk the cow, put 'em into soda water bottles, and you distribute. That's how we were kinda surviving.

Finally, I guess it got tough. We had aunties--my father's sister lived here, Ewa Plantation, Honouliuli. So, we moved over here and came in June, 1928. We came on the ship Waialeale. You know, overnight. You leave there about four or five o'clock [in the evening], get here about seven [in the morning]. Boy, we really came seasick. We stayed with a relative in School Street. Right across the insane asylum. Where the Hawaii Housing [Authority] is now used to be an insane asylum with all the walls. You know, high--six, seven feet, one by twelve walls. Used to be all the insane people there. We lived over there. Finally, my dad, in about August, bought the pig farm on Kam IV Road.

MK: Before we get into your life in Kalihi, I'm going to ask you questions about Waiakea.

AS: Okay.

MK: What was your camp called in Waiakea?

AS: Oh, Waiakea Camp Two. It's still there, and every time I go, I visit. I just was there this past November, too. I thought that was a big camp, but I go back now, I see, the small, teeny-weeny place. It was a good camp. In fact, some people still living there that

lived with us. They remember me. They say, "Oh, you Akira, ka? (Oh, are you Akira?)" You know, they still remember. Some of the houses are still there that were there when we were there. See, plantation has gone out many years ago. After we left, the plantation folded, too.

And we walked to school. Waiakea-Waena School. The bus picked us up, and we went to the Japanese[-language] school in downtown Hilo. From there, we walked home. So, we really had to have strong legs to walk around. I don't know how our parents were able to send us to Japanese school. Because we had to pay for the bus and pay gessha, as they call it. You know, tuition at the Japanese school.

MK: What was the name of that Japanese school?

AS: Jodo-shu. See, there was a Hongwanji on one side, and Jodo-shu on one side. I guess they were not on good terms, but our parents sent us to Jodo-shu.

MK: You described a little bit about Waiakea Camp Two, but can you describe for me more in detail how many houses and what kind of houses there were in that camp?

AS: Well, I know we had an out toilet. Every week, about twice, somebody used to come pick it up. Chee, I can't imagine how we lived them days, but that's how it was. Had about, I would say about twenty-five to thirty homes there in that camp. When they had movies, oh, everybody bring their goza daytime. Early during the day, you put your goza there. When the ice cream man came, boy, we couldn't get our nickel to go buy ice cream, many times. You know, the parents didn't have the money. So, that's the kind of a life we lived. Nothing extra. You just survived. I don't know how my parents were able to, because eight of us that were living all born in Waiakea Camp Two.

MK: You mentioned that you used to make the milk deliveries. To which homes did you deliver the milk?

AS: Outside of Camp Two. Some families ordered milk from us. And really, I mean, you just milk, and you put it in the bottle, and deliver, you know. No more pasteurization or anything. Surprising. That's good, real milk you were getting.

MK: How about the other families in that camp? How did they supplement their incomes?

AS: Well, some of them had vegetable gardens, tōfu-ya. That's about what it was. I guess you had some people with little more, but we all were about the same level.

MK: Ethnically, what types of people?

AS: All Japanese. Japanese and Okinawans. Actually, Japanese means Okinawans, you know. We didn't have any gaijin there. No gaijin.

MK: How about the lunas?

AS: Oh, the lunas were Portuguese or something like that, you know. From when I was about second grade, I started to work in the cane field. Hō hana. Get one hoe, get up about four thirty in the morning, catch that cane car. They call it "cane car." You know, used to load cane. We go to our destination and we started working. Boy, we enjoyed our lunch. One small kaukau tin. That's all you had. Maybe ume-boshi and rice. If you had something good, well, that was because payday. And payday, they used to take us all the way down to the mill, Waiakea Mill. Everything in silver coin. Seven, eight dollars. One month of work, and that's what we were getting.

My two brothers who were working, they used to help me with my hō hana, too, because I was small. Only young. Only about eight, nine years old. So, they used to come out, and finish their row, and kind of [help me]. . . . But the lunas used to get after us if you cut too much cane, eh? So, we plant the cane back. (Chuckles) We plant the cane back so that the luna doesn't know. But somehow, they find out sometimes. They come and raise hell. Every time when you go to the cane row, you look ahead if get the stone pile. You know, Hilo has lot of stone piles. So, naturally, if you come there, you don't have to do. You walk around, and you go to your row.

(Laughter)

AS: But the luna used to watch them. When you pau, quit, you go to the next, see? Let's say, if eight of us were working. Each side, somebody hō hana. You know, stone pile. So, they slow down. But the luna comes, "Hey, come on. Go ahead, ahead." Keep going, you know. Because they know why everybody playing their games, they want to hit the one with the stone pile. Really, that's not that much, but you know when we were kids, eh? And the luna---they used to come with water. We used to play our game, too. We like to drink water all the time. But really, we worked from morning until late at night, boy. Long hours we used to work. Ten, twelve hours. And piddling [pay]. Maybe, chee, as I said, boy, not even half a dollar day.

MK: What were your feelings about doing that kind of work then?

AS: At that time? Nothing. We were happy to get that. That's the only time we get that silver dollar. We used to buy ice cream, one cone, and the rest all went to the family. Now days, nobody gives money to the parents.

MK: Old style, yeah?

AS: Yeah, you give everything.

MK: You mentioned the camp had movies, ice cream man. What else did it have that you folks could do for entertainment?

AS: We used to play ball. That's why, most of the camp boys were good baseball players. We used to play baseball. We had what we called a "kyōkai-dō." In other words, a small hall. I remember when we were there, first time I got exposed to religion was (by) Dr. Hunt. You know, from Hongwanji? And chee, we got intrigued. Ey, man, and he started to talk about it. Good storyteller, that fellow. Till then, I didn't know what religion was all about. That's the first time I was exposed to religion. But of course, I didn't embrace the religion. That's the first time--when he came and he told story. I guess we were all Buddhists at that time, you know.

MK: As a kid, do you remember any plantation reaction to, say, Dr. Hunt coming down?

AS: No. Except that my parents them used to talk about the boss. "Pilau, pilau boss." (Chuckles) You know? Yeah, and luna. "Oh, Pordagee luna, no good, no good." Oh, they used to cuss and curse the lunas. Some were good, some were not. Because we all used to work, see? From Papa all the way down. My sisters [too].

MK: Who was the youngest one working and how old?

AS: I was the youngest that went to a plantation field, and then we moved here, see?

MK: And then, you mentioned you went to Waiakea . . .

AS: Waiakea-Waena.

MK: Waiakea-Waena School.

AS: It's still there. If you go to Hilo, you look for Waiakea-Waena on the way to Volcano.

MK: How was that school for you?

AS: Well, when I look back now, I think them days, the teachers. . . . I guess maybe our background, too. We go home, we only speak Japanese, right? I mean, pidgin kind Japanese. So, the teachers, I guess, just went with what the pupil can take at that time. They didn't push us that much. When I look back now, I wish the teachers kind of pushed us little more and gave us encouragement. Of course, P.T.A. [Parent-Teacher Association], like that, our parents never did go. My parents never set foot in an English school. Some others, yeah, they did, but not ours. And I think, chee, I wonder if many of the teachers were qualified teachers. I don't think so. Now I think that way, but maybe at that time we were happy, eh?

You didn't have to study too hard.

MK: How about when you were a little kid playing at school? Who were your classmates and playmates?

AS: Chee, you know, I don't recall too good. Must have been all our friends. Because I don't remember getting into trouble. I very vividly remember Christmas programs, Santa Claus. But we didn't have Santa Claus at home. I mean, we didn't even have Christmas at home. We didn't know what it was, exchange gifts. Only babies. But those days it's nothing. We didn't even think about Christmas, or Valentine, or. . . . And they used to have county fair--Hilo County Fair. And was a big deal, boy. We wore shoes them days to go. That's the only time we can wear shoes, and all hand-me-down kind. You know, shoes. We can't afford. So, we used to go to the county fair in Hilo, but no more money, too. So, nothing to do, except the old man used to buy maybe ice cream, ice cake.

At home, we never did have ice box, huh? There's no ice box. My mom used to cook only with takigi. You know what's takigi, eh? Yeah, we used to go gather takigi, go chop, and all that. Kerosene stove came later. Sekiyu rampu. And we had no electricity. Finally, the electricity came, and even then, you only get one bulb in one room, you know. That's how it was. No cars. My papa bought one Model-T. He was one of the first few that bought Model-T. I remember my mom was trying to learn how to drive. She couldn't cut it. They hired somebody to teach her how to drive. She couldn't do it. (Chuckles) I guess, you know, Japanese lady.

To doctors, like that, my oldest brother used to tell this story. They took my second to the youngest one to the doctor. Doctor said, "Oh, this dame already." So, he remembers he and my mother carried him home already. No more hope. You know, carried him home from doctor to home. And he survived. He still living. Yeah, but he wasn't taken in the Army because he has heart [trouble] from that time. Yeah, the doctor say, "Mo kore shinuru (He'll die soon)." And so, Mama and my brother carried him home. Those days, you can't even afford. The bus was about ten cents, you know. But you can't. We used to walk home through the railroad tracks.

MK: You just mentioned bus, was that a regular bus . . .

AS: Sampan bus. You know, you just catch and then, if they goes there, you lucky. If not, he may take you there, but that's all the transportation we had. We used to walk all over the place.

MK: So, nobody in your camp had like a jitney service or . . .

AS: No, no, no. But the people were nice. They shared, yeah? They get vegetable, they gave each other. And all of those things.

MK: When you were going to Waiakea-Waena, how much contact did you have with kids from other camps?

AS: Well, Camp Two, Camp Three went to the same school. This is where Richard Chinen [came from]--if you know the boxer? Those guys were--of course, they younger than us--but they (were) Camp Four guys or Camp Six boys. All those guys came from that camp. Those people and us, I know some of the boys, still I remember their names. Izumi, he's a contractor now down here. I don't know if he's still living. We had to pass Camp Three to go Waiakea-Waena School. And Camp Four was just up the road, where the golf course is now.

MK: How about non-plantation kids? Did they also attend Waiakea-Waena?

AS: Mm hmm [yes]. Chee, the only private school they had---I wonder if they had private school? I know they had an English-standard school. Of course, us guys would never qualify for that school. Some guys went to the Hilo Union School. So, that's till age ten.

MK: So you went to Waiakea-Waena and Jodo-shu for your Japanese, right?

AS: Right.

MK: And then, in 1928, when you were ten years old, in June, you moved down to Honolulu.

AS: Right.

MK: You know, when you folks were leaving Waiakea, what did you feel as a kid?

AS: I didn't want to move. You know, we so used to this lifestyle that Waiakea had. Everybody, we're good friends. We had our baseball team, all kinds. We played each other. So, baseball was the sport that everybody liked. Basketball, we hardly played. Football, I guess, lack of field, and all that, but baseball was what we played. So, I didn't want to move. In fact, my brothers, too, they thought. I guess, that's the only way of life we knew. You know, just country style. But parents insist, so we all moved. I know we had da kine toranku. (Chuckles) Put all my things in, and I moved over here.

MK: You mentioned that baseball team, was that an organized thing?

AS: No, not organized. Nothing was organized. Except that Camp Two versus Camp Three. But we weren't good enough. We were the bat boys or ball chasers. You only get about one ball, you know. You hit the ball in the bush, we all got to go look. When the ball comes out, you play. So, us guys were the watchers, you know. It wasn't organized, but was very heated [competition]. Versus Camp Three or we play Homestead. Homestead is the outsiders, by the airport, this side. See, get the Homestead, Waiakea Camp Two.

Waiakea Mill, my brother them used to play them. And us guys, we go. We watch, and as I say, we the fly chasers.

MK: What names did the camp teams have?

AS: No names. You just Camp Two, eh? Camp Two. Couple of them made the Japanese league over there. JAC--Japanese Athletic Club. Our boys.

MK: So, they were pretty good, then?

AS: Yeah, yeah. Some of them were. I figure if I were there playing ball, I would have played up there, too. When we came Honolulu, somehow, we played ball, but not that much.

MK: So, you came June 1928, and you said that you lived with some relatives on School Street across from the insane asylum.

AS: Yeah, that's what they were calling that. People yelling in there. First time, we didn't know why people were yelling inside. And they told us what it was. See, now days, everything open, right? Those days, you had about an eight-foot, one by twelve wall around.

MK: What did you think of Honolulu when you first came?

AS: Oh, big city. We landed at Pier Twelve or Fourteen, around there. Chee, plenty people. Hilo no more anything. You go down the pier, nothing there, Hilo, the pier side. I thought, "Chee, lot of people here." As soon as we came, and about a week or two, we went down Ewa, you know. We stayed there the whole summer. Some of us boys went down Ewa already. In fact, my youngest brother, he's on the Mainland now, he was kind of adopted by those people out there. Because we were getting hard time, eh? And they had money, plantation. So, my father's sister kind of took him. They took him, and raised him, and everything.

MK: When you folks were out in Ewa . . .

AS: Low Camp.

MK: How did that camp compare with your Waiakea camp?

AS: Well, the house was a later model. To me, it was more well kept. The sanitation was much better. They had water running under. The toilet was right on top that. If you go down, look, there's no Low Camp now. The hospital used to be right across. You just walk across, was the Low Camp. We stayed there about two months.

MK: What did you think of Ewa?

AS: Well, hard. Only two months and only the few friends there, eh? And happens to be Okinawan boys. You know, new boy around the

block, eh? Take us down to the mill side, go pick mangoes, dates. Yeah, they used to have dates, too, over there. And we used to go down Honouliuli, go catch crab. Oh, the crab. We can't eat 'em, we brought it home. You see, the crab, get puka like this, see? If the puka is there, you stick your hand here, you wait for the crab here. When the crab comes out, you get pinched all over all the time. We used to catch lot of crab. But now, see, all those things gone.

My auntie used to give us bag (to) pick up kiawe beans. They sell it for maybe ten cents or something. She used to give us the money. Oh, man, we were rich. Hard work, [to pick up] the kiawe beans, you got to (bend down). . . . And we used to sneak into Kahua Ranch, and they chase us. Because that's for their own cow, eh?

(Laughter)

AS: They don't want somebody go resell 'em, eh? The cows can eat 'em right from the ground. Oh, shucks. Those days, I'm sure we did bad things, but not that bad. Honest kind.

MK: While you folks were out in Ewa, how did the family survive, though?

AS: Well, they rented a place in Auld Lane. Tenement--duplex. Chinese used to be next to us. You know, Chinese, they never eat in the kitchen. Everybody used to come out and eat. Our parents [believed], those days, [if] you going eat, stay in the house. But the [Chinese] guy used to come out, eat.

And one night, my dad went to School Street (to) my other relative. Over there used to be a real racketeering area. They were gambling by the footpath. Oh, they beat up my dad. They thought he had money or something. And right after that--you know Bert Kanbara? Kanbara Store was [on] Auld Lane. Right in there. They had the store. We used to go there, buy five cents [worth of candy]. In fact, one cent was worth money. One stick candy, you know, Kanbara Store. That's why I know the Kanbaras. I don't know him [Bert Kanbara], but their Kanbara Store was there. Now dilapidated. Still over there, dilapidated. You walked through Auld Lane? We used to live about fifty feet in from Vineyard. And you got to walk, you know, to find our duplex.

MK: With your father getting beaten up and everything . . .

AS: But we didn't know. We were down Ewa. No more telephone them days, right? So, I don't know how my auntie found out. I guess maybe somebody [called]. . . . They had telephone, but only couple of families, you know. He didn't land in the hospital, but he went to emergency, I think. Yeah, they had some rough guys over there, that Auld Lane.

MK: Palama was a rough section those days.

AS: Yeah, yeah. So, that's our life in our Kalihi, the beginning. And then, we bought the hog farm on Kam IV Road.

MK: Can you tell me where on Kam IV Road that hog farm was?

AS: Well, it's about a half a mile or more above School Street. School Street was just built when we came, you know. As Harry Matsuda said, they didn't have School Street. Was just built before we came. Was nice, wide road. We thought, hoo, the wide. (Chuckles) Now, it's too narrow.

MK: What did Kam IV Road look like?

AS: Oh, nothing. Kam IV was just a paved road. No sidewalk, no nothing. Plum tree on the side and everything else. And ditch. You fall in . the ditch.

MK: When you folks moved in 1928, about how many families were in the vicinity?

AS: Oh, the whole Kam IV. . . . You know the picture we had on that, yeah? Not everybody was there, though. Some people came later, because we had a lot of vacant [areas], where the housing is now. You didn't have too many piggeries there. Then, they came, and they lease, and they build up piggery.

MK: That original hog farm that you folks had up there, from where did your dad get that land?

AS: This Arakaki family, we were all---leasing from Mendonca Estate. This lady. The man died. That's why, she had to sell. I mean, you know, she can't [take care of the farm alone]. . . . And them days, real work. I don't know how my mama fed us kids, feed the pigs, cook for us. Oh, I don't know how she did it. And wash clothes. Oh, I don't know how she managed now when I look back. And cook with firewood. We bought kerosene stove, and we were one of the first to buy icebox, you know. Paid ten dollars a month or five dollars a month. From Mr. [Choki] Kanetake, we bought that icebox. Ho, we thought miracle, that thing made ice. Small, but chee. See, my brother and Kanetake were good friends, so I guess (he) gave 'em for a low down payment and low monthly payment. Even then, wasn't that easy.

Before that, every now and then, my dad used to go pick up garbage, eh? Because my mom used to feed the pigs, herself, you know. My dad had to get up about four thirty and go pick up garbage, make his rounds. And cook the garbage. Chee, I don't know how [they did it]. . . . And we didn't help. Only Saturday, Sunday, you know, we help. In fact, we try to run away, go play football every time.

MK: (Laughs) How big was that farm back in '28?

AS: Chee, we had about, maybe, twenty sows. Now, they push(cart), eh, when they feed the pig. Just throw 'em in the trough. Them days, we carry. We put handle on the five-gallon can. You know the kind they beat [to] the Tahitian dance? We make puka. We put those wire, and we carry it. When we got little stronger, we carry four one time--two, two, because we didn't want to walk back too often. Chee, when I look back, boy, really. . . . And everything was hand. I mean, nothing is mechanized. We used to go house to house, pick up garbage. Every other day or da kine no more garbage, maybe every fourth day. They complain, though. Say, "Ey, stink, stink." You know, when they throw fish in there. You know, for three days, the fish, naturally going get worm and smelly. Oh, they complain, but what you going do? Because they don't have too much. You don't want to go all the time.

MK: So, how was it arranged, let's say, some hog farmers would cover one neighborhood to get the leftovers?

AS: No. Sometimes, let's say, get about ten houses here. Get about three guys used to go collect [from] different houses. Because he has a friend, sometimes, they tell, "Oh, don't come anymore. The other guy going come." [In our case,] we took over a man's farm. So, he had his route. But we didn't have a monopoly on it. So, if he had a friend and the guy needs garbage too, eh? They tell, "Oh, from tomorrow, we going let the guy put his can." You know, put the can. And someplace, particular, too. They want cover. So we had to go home, find old wood. Cut and put one handle. [Use] another one by two, or something, as handle. Put the cover on [the can]. You know, because the flies. Nobody had disposal, right? So, they got to depend on us. (Chuckles)

MK: I remember, as a kid, we used to always have to take it out. And then, somebody would come and pick it up.

AS: Lot of times, the can gets old, eh? Because we start off with about six, seven cans, see? The clean kind. We bring it home, we wash clean. But the other kind, we used to carry water. We had thirty two-gallon (can), and we just pour water, shake the can up. (Chuckles) So, naturally, you can't get it clean. Some guys, they come and they say, "Ah, can too dirty. You better give me new can." But we (chuckles) don't have. We used to buy them cans, you know. Hard to get money to go buy cans. Only restaurants and bakeries used to have.

MK: So, when you were a kid and your dad would collect and your mom would cook, you folks would help load and help feed . . .

AS: No, we didn't do that for long time.

MK: No?

AS: That's why I said. My sisters work hard, though. See, they above me.

MK: So, when you were a kid, you were more concerned with going to school and playing?

AS: Yeah, right, right.

MK: So, when you folks moved up to Kam IV, what school did you go to?

AS: Fern School. About two, three days. They didn't have room. We live Waikiki of Kam IV, so they shift us to Kalihi-Waena [School]. So, we went Kalihi-Waena. Them days, we don't have money for shoes, you know. The whole six grades, we went barefeet. Yeah, no money for shoes. Barefeet, every day. And short pants. And heichi [hitched] pants. You know what's a heichi pants? You know, all the shirt over here get button here, button here, and button here. So, you put that pants on, the heichi [and attach it to the buttons]. That's why we used to call 'em heichi pantsu. When we graduated into belt pants, oh, we were proud, man.

(Laughter)

MK: Grownup.

AS: Yeah, my mom used to sew our shirts and make the pants. She used to do all that and take care the pigs, boy. Chee, when I look back, if she were living, I would really treat her like a god, now. But you know, we never did that. We always talk big now, but she work, work, work. Other parents, too. They really worked. Because everybody in the same predicament.

MK: Around there where you lived, what kinds of livelihoods did people have?

AS: What do you mean by livelihoods?

MK: Like what kind of occupations did they have? All of . . .

AS: Well, all of us were in piggery. Like Harry Matsuda them went to city county work. And his neighbor across, Egami. Some others had other kind of a job like express. You know, carry heavy things--house moving, like that. Chee, I don't know if anybody. . . . One person that we talked about, Suenaga, worked in the post office. We thought the guy was superhuman. Nice big house. Well, you know, federal government [employee], so he was able to afford it. The rest of us, we never even thought of asking our dad for a car. Nobody even thought of such a thing. You were lucky you were alive.

MK: When you talk about the people over there, you seem to know them kinda well. What kind of community activities were going on?

AS: Oh, they had movies, too. Every now and then, the chihōjinkai pays for it. We all went and watch movies. And we had a picnic. That's how, I guess we just happen to be close over there. No meetings. Chee, I don't know how they got [activities organized]. . . . I guess the older people may have had meetings, but us young guys, we didn't have any. But just about after high school, we organized the valley up there. This is how we kind of started the football and all of those things.

MK: Before we get into that part, I'm going to go back to your school days. You mentioned you went to Kalihi-Waena.

AS: Right.

MK: How did you folks go and walk to Kalihi-Waena? What was the route?

AS: Kam IY Road, School Street, Gulick. That's about a mile or more. Every day we walk that. No shortcut, unless you want to walk taro patch. But we never did think of going through the taro patch. And from there [Kalihi-Waena], we used to walk School Street or, most likely, King Street, to go Japanese[-language] school. And used to have a Kalihi Union Church there. They used to have a playground in the back. We used to go there before going to Japanese school. They used to use prison helpers to clean yard and all that. Every certain time, these guys, the prison truck used to come. But we didn't think anything. Except that they had the jailbird clothes. You know, the blue sailor moku. They get star or moon. We didn't even think of those things, you know. But we used to associate with them, and nothing. Then, we used to go Japanese school. In fact, even Kalakaua [Intermediate School], we walked. That's another half a mile. We used to walk every morning. Never had bus, anyway. You either walk, or you don't go school.

MK: When you were going Kalihi-Waena, now days the buildings are all portables or concrete structures. What did Kalihi-Waena look like back then?

AS: They had that concrete structure, one. On the side, they had all bungalows. Just, you know, maybe twenty by twenty. Right around the school. And then, this main one was there. So, oh, when we got into the main building in fifth grade, we thought we graduated university. (Chuckles) You know, everybody looking forward to getting into that building. Otherwise, you out here (chuckles) in the bungalows. Ho, when you get in there, boy, we were proud like hell. We thought we owned the whole school. Yeah.

MK: And then, how about the teachers? What kind of teachers did you folks have back then?

AS: In Kalihi-Waena School, I must say, I had good teachers. I had good teachers.

KALIHI:

Place of Transition

Vol. I

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